Business in N.E. region

2338. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the economic liberalization of the country and the Government's "look east" policy has created a conducive environment for business opportunities in North-East;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to improve the business through "look east policy" in North-East region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) A number of initiatives have been taken with a view to give an economic content to Government of India's "look east" policy in the recent years. These, *inter-alia* include the following:

(i) A Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation between India and ASEAN was signed during the course of the 2nd India-ASEAN Summit in Bali, Indonesia on 8th October, 2003. This Agreement seeks to establish a Free Trade Area (FTA) covering goods, services and investments between India and ASEAN in a time frame of 10 years. Negotiations are in progress for operationalising different parts of the Agreement.

Measure to boost trade between N.E. India and Bangladesh

2339. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bangladesh is keen to expand its trade with North-East India and they have suggested to set up joint venture projects with buyback arrangement to give a boost to the ongoing trade between North-East India and Bangladesh; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) In the last three

years, the Government of Bangladesh and various trade bodies in the country have shown keen interest to forge greater economic and commerical links with North-East India. The Government of Bangladesh, has not suggested any specific joint venture projects with buyback arrangements. However, several Bangladeshi trade delegations have been visiting North-East and regularly participating in trade fairs and seminars organised in Agartala, Shillong and Guwahati.

Virignia Tobacco barns in the country

2340. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Virignia tobacco barns in the country;

(b) the number of such tobacco barns in Andhra Pradesh which are recognized by the Tobacco Board;

(c) whether it is a fact that the Tobacco Board has a scheme to modernise such tobacco barns;

(d) if so, details to this plan; and

(e) the funds earmarked for this purpose to help tobacco farmers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) There are 95,958 licensed barns in the country.

(b) For the crop season 2004-05 there are 40,130 licensed barns in Andhra Pradesh.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) As a part of fuel conservation measures, the barns are modernized through improved design of furnace and roof insulation.

(e) The budget provisions for this scheme are as under:—

2004-05	-	Rs. 87 lakhs
2005-06	-	Rs. 62 lakhs